

## **Gardening 101: A Holistic Approach**

*Krista Fayette* Co-owner/operator of New Roots Market Garden in Marshall, NC.

Contact: [newrootsmarketgarden@gmail.com](mailto:newrootsmarketgarden@gmail.com)

The basics of creating a garden, starting with our connection to the land and what we wish to receive.

*"When in the garden, I feel peace within. Here I am whole; here I am home."*

### **Manifest Your Garden Intentions**

#### **Evaluate the Space**

What is there? What will stay? What will change?

Ask yourself these questions, ask the space these questions.

Consider wildlife, pollinators, fencing, existing plants, access to water.

A child or pet friendly space.

Sit with the space, walk around slowly, mindfully, at different times during the day.

What areas get the most sunlight? Which get the least?

Take notes, draw sketches.

Are there existing garden beds? If not, where can you build them? Who can help? How would you like them spaced out and placed?

You can design your own garden if you feel confident or inspired to. Getting assistance in the garden design can be a very helpful start as well!

#### **Planning the Garden**

What would you like to receive? What type of garden fits your lifestyle? What will meet your needs? Who would you like to invite to your garden?

Keep it simple, set up for success. You can always add a little more each season as you learn.

There are many types of gardens to explore including annual and/or perennial plants:

Vegetable garden, Herb garden, Flower garden, Pollinator garden, Ornamental garden

## **Preparing the Garden Space**

**Build:** I recommend permanent or semi-permanent raised beds which are uniform in shape and size for annual beds. To deter compaction in the beds, create pathways which are mulched or wide enough to mow.

**Aerate:** Introduce air to the soil, and loosen the surface. I love using a broad fork for this.

**Amend:** It is important to have a nice topsoil layer prior to planting. I recommend a heavy layer of organic compost.

## **Planting**

### *Transplants:*

Transplant in the late afternoon or evening just before sunset. The hot sun can cause stress for these delicate babies. Early morning will work too, before the sunlight touches the earth and plants. I do not recommend morning transplanting in mid-summer, or high temperature days. Keep in mind, smoothest transition possible from trays to earth.

Hydrate, it is very important to make sure you thoroughly water your transplants prior to planting them into the earth. We want the most comfortable transition possible for them. It also helps to transplant right after the soil has been rained on or watered and will soon be watered again.

Transplanting tools, I admire DeWit garden tools for their hand-crafted quality. They carry a variety of transplanting trowels.

### *Direct Sowing:*

Once you prepare your bed, you can direct seed. Typically, for most seeds, you can do this any time of day!

Ideal bed: has some moisture but not saturated

All debris removed or raked out (leaf rake works great)

Smooth, loose topsoil surface

Figure out your seed depth. Make furrows (I like using a cobra head) or holes for seeds.

Drop in or sprinkle seeds. Then lightly cover.

Hydrate, be sure to water your seeds in, unless there is rain predicted in the near future.

Cover using floating row cover if needed.

## **Care Taking**

Check on your garden daily.

Water as needed, careful not to overwater or let the soil dry out.

Keep up with hand weeding and cultivating (DeWit's oscillating hoe is my favorite tool for this)

Sip your morning tea or coffee in the garden. Enjoy your evening meal in the garden. Feel, observe, prune.

Notice insects, colors, changes. Moisture in the air, rainfall. Walk with bare feet on the earth. Place your hands in the soil, how does it feel? What does it need?

Plants seem to tell you how they are feeling. When they are happy and when they are needing something.

Look out for the following by using all of your senses, especially sight and touch:

Wilted leaves

Discoloration

Signs of chewing

Rotting roots

We can often troubleshoot what is causing plant stress by evaluating:

Water, sunlight, temperature, insects, disease, nutrients

## **Harvesting**

Morning time, before the sunlight touches the plants. Or evening once plants have cooled down and the sun is no longer shining on them.

Be careful not to over harvest, always leave some plant matter behind.

Keep harvest shaded and cool as quickly as possible in cold water or refrigeration.

If you choose to wash your harvest, certain crops should be dried as well to retain freshness. Some crops prefer not to be washed at all, or even harvested when wet.

Keep your harvesting tools clean and sharp. I recommend keeping harvest tools solely for harvesting and stored separate from other garden tools. My favorite harvest tools are: a small Victorinox serrated knife & an ARS lightweight pruner.

### **Some Friendly Advice:**

Maintain a sense of presence in the garden. When you are feeling tired, overwhelmed, or frustrated, take a step back. Take a moment or many moments to breathe. The garden is a space of healing and it has so much to offer, it will listen and it can feel.

Keep taking courses/classes! Consider volunteering for a community garden, market garden, or farm in your area. I find that the best way to learn is to be hands on and learn from and with others.

Discover what you can forage in your garden. Many plants which grow there, want to be there and can be very valuable for your well-being!

Learn seed saving when you are ready.

### **Recommended Resources:**

Sow True Seed: Your local seed growers and gardeners! <https://sowtrueseed.com/blogs/planting> : Provides a breakdown of each crop from seed to harvest

Seed Savers Exchange: Garden Planner Slide Chart. Helps determine planting and sowing dates for most common garden vegetables using your average first and last frost date.

No Taste Like Home: <https://notastelikehome.org/> : Consider taking a wild foods tour or course to discover what nutritious or medicinal plants might be hiding in your garden already!

### **Literature:**

Vegetable Gardening in the Southeast: *Ira Wallace* A monthly planting guide and more, specifically for our region

Carrots Love Tomatoes: *Louise Riotte* Beginner friendly guide to companion planting and simple garden planning

The Resilient Gardener: *Carol Deppe* A focus on year-round food crops for nourishment and survival

Creating Sanctuary: *Jessi Bloom* Steps towards creating a sacred space out of your garden

Raised-Bed Vegetable Gardening: *Raymond Nones* A simple approach to backyard or urban gardens for the beginner or experienced gardener

Incredible Wild Edibles: *Samuel Thayer* Provides a thorough explanation of 36 essential wild foods that may be growing in your garden already!